



Joseph E. Lambert
Chief Justice

Supreme Court of Kentucky

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Chief Justice Lambert elected to 3rd term as Chief Justice of Kentucky

FRANKFORT, Ky., April 11, 2006 — The justices of the Supreme Court of Kentucky voted yesterday to elect Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert to a third four-year term as Chief Justice, which will begin Oct. 2, 2006. The Kentucky Constitution provides that the justices of the Supreme Court shall elect one of their number to serve as Chief Justice for a term of four years.

"I am grateful for the continued confidence of my colleagues," said Chief Justice Lambert. "I appreciate the opportunity to follow through on the important initiatives being carried out by the Kentucky of Court of Justice."

Chief Justice Lambert joined the Supreme Court in 1987 after being elected by the citizens of the 3rd Supreme Court District, which is comprised of 27 counties in Southcentral Kentucky. He was named Kentucky's fourth chief justice in 1998 by a vote of his Supreme Court colleagues. The justices voted again on April 15, 2002, to elect him to a second term, which began Oct. 2 of that year. Chief Justice Lambert's current eight-year term as a justice of the Supreme Court runs through 2010.

During his tenure, Chief Justice Lambert has focused on implementing cutting-edge programs in technology, court records, judicial education, justice facilities, pretrial services, promotion of women, and Family and Drug courts. As a result, the Kentucky court system is proving to be one of the Commonwealth's finest achievements. Chief Justice Lambert counts among his most significant accomplishments the 2002 passage of the constitutional amendment that made Family Court a permanent part of the Kentucky Constitution.

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The Kentucky Bar Association named him Outstanding Judge of Kentucky in 2000. He received the Leadership Award from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals in 2000. He was given the Kentucky Public Advocate Award in 2001. In 2003, he was awarded the Kentucky Bar Association President's Special Service Award. In 2004, he received the Civil Rights Award from both the Northern Kentucky NAACP and the Lexington NAACP for his commitment to eliminating discrimination. Chief Justice Lambert serves on the boards of the National Conference of Chief Justices and The Center for Rural Development in Somerset, Ky. He is chair of the board for the Rockcastle Hospital and Respiratory Care Center in Mt. Vernon, Ky.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Georgetown College, Georgetown, Ky., and a juris doctor from the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law, which gave him its Distinguished Alumni Award. He is a native of Rockcastle County and lives in Mt. Vernon with his wife, Debra, a Family Court judge for Lincoln, Pulaski and Rockcastle counties. They have two sons, Joseph and John.

Quotes from colleagues regarding Chief Justice Lambert being elected to a third term

Gov. Ernie Fletcher

Commonwealth of Kentucky

"Chief Justice Lambert is a strong advocate of equal treatment for all who come before the courts. I am pleased he can continue to carry out his work on behalf of Kentucky citizens who deserve a fair and equal justice system."

Justice Martin E. Johnstone

Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Kentucky

"Maintaining cohesion among the Supreme Court justices is often not an easy task, yet Chief Justice Lambert has been able to successfully balance our distinct personalities with our strong allegiance to the law. The result has been a Supreme Court whose ongoing priority is the fair application of justice to all."

David B. Sloan

President of the Kentucky Bar Association and an attorney in Covington, Ky.

"As an independent agency of the Supreme Court, the Kentucky Bar Association has benefited from Chief Justice Lambert's ability to carefully regulate the practice of law so that citizens can expect an efficient judicial system and a high standard of professionalism from members of the Bar."

Allan W. Vestal

Dean of the University of Kentucky College of Law

"It has been my pleasure to work with Chief Justice Lambert on the Kentucky Legal Education Opportunity Program. He supported the creation of KLEO as a way to give scholarships to economically disadvantaged Kentucky residents. I applaud his efforts to help make law school available to all citizens who want to earn a law degree."

Anthony M. Wilhoit

Retired Chief Judge of the Kentucky Court of Appeals

and current Executive Director of the Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission

"Chief Justice Lambert gave impetus to the first committee in Kentucky to encourage ethical campaign behavior for judges in anticipation of the judicial elections taking place in 2006. I admire the high standards he sets for both sitting judges and those running for election."

Background Information

Improving Kentucky's Court Facilities

Kentucky is beginning to attract attention nationwide for the Facilities Management System it implemented to objectively set priorities for court facility improvements. "We believe this system is one of the most sophisticated and effective ever created to accurately assess facility needs," said Chief Justice Lambert. "This comprehensive process ensures that Kentucky counties are given fair and impartial consideration when it comes to setting priorities for court facility projects."

Chief Justice Lambert worked with the 2000 General Assembly to pass House Bill 734, which authorized the chief justice to establish rules to govern and regulate the state's courthouse construction program. In October 2000, Chief Justice Lambert implemented a comprehensive system for facility development by signing facilities-related policies and practices into the Administrative Procedures for the Court of Justice, Part X, which carry the authority of law.

In only six years, the Kentucky Facilities Management System has exceeded all expectations in its ability to provide practical, efficient and cost-effective judicial buildings for Kentucky citizens. Under this new system, the 2000 General Assembly authorized construction of 20 new facilities. Of those, 19 have been completed. The estimated cost was \$251 million and the final cost was \$255 million. The Court of Justice currently has four projects under construction, 12 under design this year and 19 with design pending next year. These projects represent an investment of \$481 million in much-needed judicial facilities in Kentucky.

Kentucky Family Court

Family Court currently serves more than 2 million Kentuckians throughout 43 counties. Family Court was implemented in 38 of these counties during Chief Justice Lambert's tenure. Family Court provides one judge to hear all of a family's issues relating to divorce, child custody, adoption, termination of parental rights, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. Because Family Court is devoted exclusively to cases involving families and children, these cases do not compete for court time with criminal and other civil cases. Family Court is a division of Circuit Court, Kentucky's highest trial court level, and employs full-time judges with the same qualifications as those who serve other divisions of Circuit Court.

Kentucky Drug Court

Kentucky has established 50 Drug Court programs statewide since 1998. Prior to that time, Drug Court existed only in Fayette, Warren and Ballard/Carlisle/Fulton/Hickman counties. Since Drug Court's inception, 4,523 individuals have been accepted into the program, with 1,385 of those graduating and 1,207 still participating. Of this number, 2,660 individuals have participated in the program and 699 have graduated during Chief Justice Lambert's tenure.

Only 20.2 percent of Drug Court graduates were convicted of a new felony in the two years after they graduated, versus a 57.3 percent felony conviction rate for those who did not participate in Drug Court, but were on probation for offenses similar to those committed by Drug Court participants. Since the inception of Drug Court, approximately 200 drug-free babies have been born to Drug Court participants. The state saves \$2.72 for every dollar spent on Drug Court graduates; the greatest return on investment comes from costs the criminal justice system can avoid.

Racial Equality

Chief Justice Lambert is a strong advocate for fair and equal treatment of all citizens who come before Kentucky courts, regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Six years ago he established the Office of Minority Affairs at the Administrative Office of the Courts to enhance minority and diversity outreach programs. In 2002, he introduced the Kentucky Legal Education Opportunity Program to provide scholarships to Kentucky's three public law schools as a way to bring more economically disadvantaged citizens, including African-Americans, into the legal profession. In the fall of 2005, Chief Justice Lambert addressed the state's district and circuit judges with a speech devoted to his views on racial fairness.

He continues his efforts to help ensure that juries in Kentucky fairly represent all races and a cross section of the community. Chief Justice Lambert has met with representatives of the Louisville Chapter of the NAACP, including President Raoul Cunningham and former state Sen. Georgia Davis Powers, who serves as vice president. They met last November and again in January and March 2006. At their most recent meeting, several officials from the Administrative Office of the Courts gave the NAACP a thorough overview of how the jury process works, from the creation of the master jury list through the selection of jurors for actual service.

Technology Services

Chief Justice Lambert's administration supported the creation of a statewide court case management system that has put Kentucky on the cutting edge of court technology nationwide. Unlike states that still maintain court data on a county-by-county basis, Kentucky's statewide network allows the collection of data from every court facility in Kentucky to reside at one central location, the Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort. The Department of Technology Services has also implemented a statewide e-mail system for Court of Justice personnel; launched a Web site that provides comprehensive information on the Kentucky Court of Justice along with Supreme Court /Court of Appeals opinions and court dockets statewide; automated the jury management process; provided digital audio capability for court recordings in District Court; created a computerized bookkeeping program for the Offices of Circuit Court Clerk; and produced a platform to support the new E-Citation program.

Supreme Court of Kentucky

The Supreme Court is the state court of last resort and the final interpreter of Kentucky law. Seven justices sit on the Supreme Court and all seven justices rule on appeals that come before the court. The justices are elected from seven appellate districts and serve eight-year terms. A chief justice, chosen for a four-year term by fellow justices, is the administrative head of the state's court system and is responsible for its operation. The Supreme Court may order a ruling or opinion to be "published," which means that the ruling becomes the case law governing all similar cases in the future in Kentucky.

The Administrative Office of the Courts

The Administrative Office of the Courts supports the activities of more than 3,400 Kentucky Court of Justice employees, including the elected offices of justices, judges and circuit court clerks. As the fiscal agent for the Court of Justice, the AOC prepares a biennial budget recommendation and executes the Judicial Branch budget. The AOC works closely with the Chief Justice to ensure the Court of Justice fulfills its statutory duties as stated in the Kentucky Constitution. These duties include serving as the fiscal agent for the court system; providing oversight and administration of court facilities; maintaining data processing systems; dispersing supplies and equipment; administering personnel policies and payroll; overseeing state pretrial and juvenile services programs; and offering educational programs for judges, circuit court clerks and support staff.

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